

4VAC15-240-31. Game: Turkey: Open Season; Certain Counties and Areas; the Saturday Prior to the Last Monday in October, and for 13 Days Following, on Thanksgiving Day, and on the Monday Closest to December 2 and for 12 Days Following.

Summary:

The proposal is to i) open the fall season one week earlier, ii) add the Wednesday before Thanksgiving to the fall season, iii) delete six counties from this regulation, and iv) add four counties to this regulation.

Proposed language of amendment:

1 **4 VAC 15-240-31. Open Season; Certain Counties and Areas; 14 Days Immediately Before the**
2 **Saturday Prior to the Last First Monday in ~~October~~ November, and for 13 Days Following, on**
3 **Thanksgiving Day and the Day Before, and on the Monday Closest to December 2 and for 12 Days**
4 **Following.**

5
6 It shall be lawful to hunt turkeys ~~on~~ 14 days immediately before the Saturday prior to the ~~last first~~
7 Monday in ~~October~~ November, and for 13 days following on Thanksgiving Day and the day before, and
8 on the Monday closest to December 2 and for 12 days following in the counties of Accomack, Amelia,
9 Buchanan, Charles City, Dinwiddie, Gloucester, Greensville, Isle of Wight, James City, King George,
10 Lancaster, Mathews, Middlesex, New Kent, Northampton, Northumberland, Powhatan, Prince George,
11 Richmond, Southampton, Surry, Sussex, Westmoreland, York (except on Camp Peary), and the City of
12 Suffolk.

Rationale:

The proposed fall season would open one week earlier so it would not overlap the early deer muzzleloader season. As described in the rationale for 4 VAC 15-240-10 above, an earlier season was requested by turkey hunters and Law Enforcement officers.

Turkey populations in the Northern Neck region, which includes King George, Westmoreland, Richmond, Northumberland, and Lancaster counties, are among the highest in the state and most are continuing to expand. Many turkey hunters in the region have contacted the Department asking for longer turkey seasons in these counties, some indicating they have limited opportunities to take youth hunters under the current four-week fall season. Removing these five counties from this regulation will automatically place them in the general eight-week fall season. Under the general season, Northern Neck hunters will have four additional weeks of fall hunting: two weeks in December and two weeks in January.

The Wild Turkey Management Plan calls for increasing turkey populations in Amelia, Dinwiddie, Greensville, and Powhatan counties. However, these counties are showing significant long-term population declines. Shortening the fall season from eight to four weeks in these counties should increase survival rates, due to a reduction of hunting mortality, and spur population growth.

The turkey population in Buchanan county is meeting its Turkey Plan objective (stabilize); therefore, staff proposes the fall season be expanded to six weeks (see 4 VAC 15-240-32 below).